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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 009013

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: UNRWA COMMISSIONER GENERAL SUCCESSION

REF: TEL AVIV 5436

Classified By: Acting DCM Christopher Henzel for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: At the informal UNRWA Major Donors Meeting in Amman October 13-14, PRM A/S Dewey met with Commissioner General Peter Hansen to inform him that the United States does not support any extension of his tenure beyond his current term, which expires in February. Hansen claimed he had the backing of some Arab states and was willing to stay & if asked.8 He appears to be banking on his relationship with SYG Annan and the inability of donors to find a qualified replacement. A/S Dewey also met with big donors on the margins of the conference to express our desire to see Hansen replaced. They agreed that Hansen should go, but noted that the EU would likely adopt a common position, which would be heavily determined by Denmark,s position (as Hansen is Danish). Israel and the U.K. have possible candidates in mind to replace Hansen, while Japan has begun lobbying for its candidate. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) At a private breakfast meeting October 14 with Hansen, his deputy Karen Abu Zayd, and UNRWA Director of External Relations Andrew Whitley, A/S Dewey asked Hansen what his plans were. (Note: PRM PDAS Rich Greene had informed Abu Zayd on multiple occasions over the past six months of the U.S. position that three terms in office is enough for Hansen and that we had solicited other donors to nominate qualified candidates to replace him.) Hansen responded that he had just bought a new apartment in Copenhagen, but then added that certain Arab states had asked him to stay on in his job, and that he was willing to do so & if asked.8 He noted that he was not considering a fourth three-year term, but that one year was too short, because he would be a lame duck. He seemed to have some indefinite period less than three years in mind.

3. (C) A/S Dewey replied that he was unaware of any groundswell of support for an extension, and that the U.S. opposed it. He noted that USUN Ambassador Danforth had conveyed our position to SYG Annan. He added that USG outrage over Hansen,s recent remark that Hamas members were on his staff would make it difficult for Hansen to remain in office even until his current term expires. He relayed that a group of furious congressmen had requested that Secretary Powell press SYG Annan to replace Hansen immediately, or risk a cutoff of U.S. funding to the agency (USD 127 million in FY 04).

4. (C) Abu Zayd dismissed the notion that the SYG would remove Hansen before his term was up. Hansen inquired whether there were any candidates to replace him. A/S Dewey said that the Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman wanted Hansen,s job and was being backed strongly by his government. Hansen said he had not been aware of that fact.

5. (C) In a pull-aside with A/S Dewey later that day, Abu Zayd said that British citizen Ian Martin would make a good choice for a new ComGen. A/S Dewey promised to follow up to learn about his interest and availability for the job. Martin was the UN SRSG for East Timor and Deputy SRSG in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Subsequently, in an October 15 meeting with the Israeli MFA in Jerusalem (septel), the head of the international affairs division, Roni Yaar, suggested Norwegian Geir Pedersen (UN Department of Political Affairs, Director of Asia/Pacific Division) for the job. Yaar had just met with Pedersen, a member of the UN team sent by SYG Annan to investigate a GOI allegation of misuse of UNRWA ambulances, and found him fair and reasonable. Yaar also recommended Australian Chris Lamb, who works for IFRC.

6. (C) In bilateral meetings on the margin of the major donors meeting with Japan, Norway, Sweden, the U.K., Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the EC, A/S Dewey found universal agreement that Hansen had to go when his term ends in February. Donors agreed with A/S Dewey that Hansen not only caused problems with his antagonistic relationship with Israel and public relations blunders, but also was a major impediment to implementing needed reforms to the agency, especially timely if donors are going to be forthcoming with massive new investment UNRWA wants over the next five years to fund new schools, health clinics, housing, and other infrastructure. Donors were still scrambling to identify a

suitable replacement for Hansen, with several noting that they had not put forth a candidate because their country already held at least one high level UN position and they could not expect to obtain another at the same time. Japan continues to strongly back its candidate, despite A/S Dewey,s caution that neither we nor the Europeans believe he is qualified. Japan knows that there is at present no other candidate who wants the job and is backed by his or her government, and appears to hope that its candidate will be the only alternative to Hansen. Japan is the second largest donor to the UN but at present none of its nationals holds a high-level UN job.

17. (U) PRM PDAS Richard Greene cleared this message.

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